

6-3-69

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MEMORANDUM FOR MR. FLANIGAN

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *hkd*

SUBJECT: Your Memo on Views of the Jewish Community

In response to your May 19 note sending me Irving Felt's memo, I have several comments:

I. Explaining our Mid-East Policy to the Jewish Community

I am interested that we are already doing most of the things in Irving Felt's memo (see IV below) and yet the Jewish Community is still concerned. Obviously, there is need for private, off-the-record communication with the Community's leaders. My staff can supply the substance of what should be communicated, but someone on the domestic side of the house who really knows the Community would have to map the contacts.

I have taken the initiative with Bryce Harlow--with the President's approval--to be in touch with influential members of Congress on this subject. But so far, we have been unable to find anyone on the staff interested in mapping the strategy for a parallel effort in the Jewish Community at large.

Several people have, in one way or another, offered their services. Max Fisher in February came to us, and the President designated him our point of contact. Leonard Garment has had some contacts with the Israelis. Now I see Bob Ellsworth has sought out Irving Felt.

If there is interest in this subject, what we need is someone in-house on the political staff to be the sole manager, in coordination with the substantive help of my staff.

II. How Much Is the Effort Worth?

You are a better judge than I of the political possibilities for this Administration in the Jewish Community.

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What I see is the possibility of a highly disruptive Zionist campaign against our Mid-East policy which might even spill over into attacks on other aspects of the President's policy. While this has not now reached crisis proportions, I am a firm believer in preventive diplomacy (at home and abroad). That is why I asked the President's permission to brief a few of the Congressional opinion-makers.

III. A Channel to the Israelis

One aspect of the problem not mentioned in your note is the possibility of opening an unofficial channel to the Israeli government.

The Israelis like to have someone out of official channels with whom they can be completely frank and say what is really worrying them. They also like to have someone who can tell them without diplomatic embellishment what is on the President's mind. The Israelis have been groping to find someone on the White House staff and someone in the Jewish Community who can constitute such a channel.

I personally feel we must be very careful about this because it opens the President's flank to all kinds of pressures. However, I can see the value to us of having one or two close Administration contacts who also have good connections in Jerusalem. It is one thing to deflect the Community from attacking us on Israel's behalf; it is even more useful to turn the Community into our spokesmen to the Israelis. But someone who really knows the Community and the diplomatic situation must cultivate these people.

IV. Comment on Irving Felt's Concerns

Peace in the Mid-East. This statement sounds pretty much like a description of our view of the four-power talks.

Jerusalem. Our working paper tabled at the four-power talks calls for a unified city.

Phantom jets. Aircraft deliveries are on schedule, (50 Skyhawk jets have arrived; production of Phantom jets underway; delivery begins in September.

Economic aid. Our general economic aid level has declined because Israel has a per capita GNP higher than Italy's. We have extended credit for military purchases. We are considering a small desalting project.

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Education. Our deficiencies in the field of educational exchanges are global, and we shall have to attack the problem on a broad front.

V. Conclusions:

1. The President feels very strongly that no minority group should have a veto over our foreign policy. This is why he has resisted up to now opening a special channel to the White House either for the Israelis or for American Zionists. He has felt this is not good for us and not even good for Israel. This is an argument for approaching this problem with great caution; we want to keep some distance between us and the Zionists. But it is not an argument against some judicious briefing; in fact, a little preventive work might help avoid strong minority pressures.

2. My time for this kind of domestic work is quite limited but I would be glad to contribute what I can and to have my senior staff man on the Mid-East (Hal Saunders) work with you if you wish to press the point further.

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ACTION

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May 22, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Harold H. Saunders

SUBJECT: Attached Memo from Peter Flanigan

Mr. Flanigan has sent you a note about "establishing an antree, on a very informal and confidential basis, to the Jewish community for the Administration." (Tab B).

I have previously written you memos describing the problem (such as those at Tab C).

I must confess that I sense some lack of coordination--first it was Max Fisher, now Irving Felt--but I really shouldn't say that because I don't know what Messrs. Ellsworth and Flanigan have been doing. But we do need somebody on the political side of the staff to whom we can talk on issues of this kind.

Just one example, back in February, I got wind of a B'nai B'rith meeting to map an advertising campaign against the four-power talks. I just couldn't find anyone on the staff who was sure enough of himself--or even interested enough--to try to turn B'nai B'rith off, so the campaign went ahead.

Recommendation: You may wish to send the memo at Tab A to Mr. Flanigan.

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